



Eich cyf/Your ref P-06-1286
Ein cyf/Our ref EM/03813/22

Jack Sargeant MS
Chair - Petitions Committee
Senedd Cymru
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1SN

21 November 2022

Dear Jack,

Thank you for your further letter regarding petition no. P-06-1286 about ensuring the continuation of cancer screening and treatment during the COVID-19 pandemic.

You asked what progress has been made regarding cancer waiting times over recent months, and whether these have returned to pre-pandemic waiting times.

It is really pleasing to see that the number of cancer referrals is now consistently above the pre-pandemic level. This means that people are confident to visit their GP with suspected cancer symptoms. We were concerned that people were not presenting with symptoms. In August (the latest available data) NHS Wales had 16,389 referrals for suspected cancer, the highest number ever received

This constant increase in demand, alongside capacity issues at first outpatients and the diagnostic stage of the pathway is having an impact on our ability to treat patients within 62 days. However, the number of people starting treatment within the month continues to grow and during August, nearly 1,700 patients started their first definitive cancer treatment, the highest number since March. Reassuringly, in August 13,500 patients were informed they did not have cancer, the highest ever recorded, and were subsequently downgraded off the suspected cancer pathway. It is important to remember that the patients, who are found not to have cancer are still seen and diagnosed within the targets set. The latest data for August shows the total numbers starting treatment or downgraded is the highest ever recorded and continues the upward trend seen over recent months.

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Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

In October, I held a cancer summit and made clear my expectation to the health boards that it is important that further action is taken to improve cancer performance, ensuring that the clinically ill patients are prioritised. However, it is likely that performance will not improve until the end of the financial year.

I hope this information is helpful.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'M. E. Morgan'.

Eluned Morgan AS/MS

Y Gweinidog Iechyd a Gwasanaethau Cymdeithasol
Minister for Health and Social Services